

WASHINGTON -- Earlier today **Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01)** and **Hartford Mayor Pedro Segarra** testified in front of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands on behalf of the Coltsville Historic District's bid to become a National Historic Park.

H.R. 2504, the *Coltsville National Historic Park Act*, was one of 13 bills heard by the committee today.

Last September Congressman Larson and Mayor Segarra [welcomed Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar](#) to Hartford as the Secretary and the lawmakers toured the Coltsville facility. During that visit, the Secretary threw his support behind the project.

Last October during a hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee's Subcommittee on National Parks , **Acting Associate Director for Park Planning, Facilities, and Lands, National Park Service, Dept. of the Interior William D. Shaddox** reiterated Secretary Salazar's support.

Below are the remarks of both Congressman Larson and Mayor Segarra as prepared for delivery.

Congressman Larson:

Thank you, Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the Committee for holding this important hearing.

Before I begin I would like to take a moment to recognize the Mayor of the City of Hartford, Connecticut, Pedro Segarra, who is here today to testify as a witness in support of Coltsville being established as a National Historic Park which highlights the local, state, federal and private partnership that Coltsville presently enjoys and which is critical for its overall success. Mayor Segarra will outline the importance of Coltsville to the local community in Hartford and share the results of a recently commissioned economic analysis done on Coltsville and its potential to create jobs and increase economic activity in Hartford. This report strongly supports the Department of Interior's findings that every dollar spent by the federal government on National Parks creates four dollars of economic value into the local economy.

I also would like to recognize Peggy O'Dell, deputy director for operations of the National Park Service who will be speaking in support of the Coltsville National Historic Park Act. This year Secretary Ken Salazar of the Department of Interior and Don Hellman, legislative director for the National Park Service made separate trips up to see Coltsville first hand. On September 24th after touring Coltsville Secretary Salazar remarked to the press, our Governor, Mayor Segarra and the Congressional delegation that Coltsville, "is a great candidate for inclusion into the National Park System," and that he "will work hard to make it happen even in these fiscally challenging times."

As the birth place of the Industrial Revolution, Coltsville is an endowment of American history that must be preserved. As a National Historic Park, Coltsville would tell the story of the Colt family and one of the most iconic precision manufacturing companies in American history. America knows the story of the Colt revolver that won the west which will be told in an exquisite vibrancy through extensive collections presently housed in the basement of the Connecticut state library. But perhaps it's the story of Sam and Elizabeth Colt and Coltsville that America does not know that is the most persuasive reason for establishing a National Park at Coltsville. It is the story of the innovative formation of the first US company to export its products overseas and produce the firearms that have been used in every US conflict since the Civil War. It is the story of how Henry Ford and Pratt and Whitney came to Coltsville in order to study the unique manufacturing process and work/life community established by the Colt family. It is also the story of how a woman, Samuel Colt's widow, Elizabeth, managed one of the nation's most profitable and important industries for 40 years, after the death of her husband, at a time when she could not even vote.

I have been working on establishing Coltsville as a National Park diligently for the past 12 years and an extensive amount of due diligence has been done by the Park Service, the State of Connecticut, the City of Hartford, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and this Committee along the way. In 2003, President Bush signed the Coltsville Resource Study Act, which got the ball rolling. Afterwards Coltsville needed to be established as a National Historic Landmark, which was completed by then Secretary Dirk Kempthorne in September of 2007.

After the completion of a visitor experience study commissioned by the State of Connecticut in 2008 and the National Park Service Resource Study in 2009 we began pursuing responsible legislation in our challenging fiscal times that mirrored the newly added Patterson, New Jersey, National Historic Park. The Patterson model of creating a pathway for National Park Status with the Park Service and Secretary holding the power to give final approval gives the Park Service the insurance and protections it needs to make Coltsville into a successful member of the Park Service portfolio without overburdening its budget.

What we are working on isn't an enormous park as one might see out West, but it is equally as grand and equally as important. By the National Park Service creating a visitor center in 10,000 square feet in Coltsville's East Armory, modeled after the community Visitor experience study referenced in the Special Resource Study, the history of Colt would be preserved. The initial concept is to have the extensive Colt collections of firearms housed in the basement of the Connecticut State Library and the art collections of Elizabeth Colt reflecting different points in Coltsville's history presently held by the Wadsworth Atheneum on display on a rotating basis. In addition, the main visitor experience attraction would be an interactive elevator ride from the first floor to the dome that sits on top of the East Armory with each floor depicting a different era and historic moment in Coltsville's history. In conjunction with this visitor center Colt Manufacturing has expressed significant interest in bring the manufacturing and engraving of its collection firearms back to the East Armory which would add to the overall visitor experience at no expense to the Park Service. The rest of Coltsville's historic properties: the Church of the Good Shephard at the home of Sam and Elizabeth Colt will be maintained by the present ownership and interpreted externally and internally through agreements made with the National Park Service.

Every year since I can remember Connecticut has sent more money to Washington to fund the US Government then it has received in return with one of the lowest return rates of all 50 states. In 2010 Connecticut taxpayers sent just under \$44 billion to Washington and received \$31.1 billion in return, about 70 cents on the dollar. This being said Connecticut has one unit in the Park Service portfolio, a small Historic site called Weir Farm in Southern Connecticut which requires minimal park service support. In Connecticut we don't ask for much from the federal government but the state and the City of Hartford need the expertise, recognition and validation that the Park Service brings in order to appropriately preserve one of the National most historic areas in Coltsville.

Mayor Segarra:

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Minority Member Grijalva, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands:

On behalf of the City of Hartford, which recently celebrated its 375th Anniversary, I appear before you today in support of *H.R. 2504*, the designation of the Coltsville Historic District as a National Park. I want to thank Congressman John Larson and Senators Lieberman and Blumenthal for their tireless support of this critical and important initiative. This effort, which also has the broad support of the City's business community, institutions, and organizations, is critical to the revitalization of Connecticut's Capital City, and will become a centerpiece of the City's effort to increase its focus on heritage tourism. It will also stand as model for future innovation.

The Colt Manufacturing facility, and surrounding structures, played a critical – if not essential – role in our national defense, defining the direction of the United States during a time of great exploration and innovation. It not only changed the face of national and international business and commerce, but also enhanced and further promoted the spirit of American business ingenuity, and its role in local community. It is symbolic that we are now again presented with a monumental decision that, if approved, will help to shape and encourage an ongoing renaissance in the City of Hartford and further promote the historic and necessary investment that Governor Dannel Malloy has made to restore funding designed to promote Connecticut's culture and tourism destinations.

The City of Hartford, State of Connecticut, and the collaborative of associated public and private entities, is deeply invested in the Coltsville neighborhood. The City has already rebuilt two schools and improved housing stock in the immediate area, and has committed almost \$3 million dollars in matching funds to improve surrounding streets in ways that will redefine space, improve visuals, increase safety and enhance the overall vibrancy of the area. We also stand ready to assist with other elements as greater scope and definition are added to the revitalization of one of America's first, and arguably most preeminent, industrial zones. A commitment has also been made by local businesses, property owners, and managers, such as the Colt Gateway, Riverfront Recapture and the Capitol Region Education Council, to preserve, maintain and manage their properties in accordance with the National Park Service and Historic Preservation Guide. A National Park at Coltsville will only require the Park Service to manage the 10,000 square feet designated in the East Armory. All other areas will be interpreted externally or an agreement with the National Parks Service will be established during the evaluation period outlined in the legislation.

It is important to briefly recognize the number of jobs this effort will create and the overall impact to the economy. Not only will the trades benefit through an intense construction effort, but long term job growth for the region across the entire job spectrum; not only in direct benefits to the leisure and hospitality sector, but also those critical indirect and secondary job markets that will be added and supported as well. With an intense focus and commitment in these areas, the region has already seen over 1,000 new jobs created and the infusion of \$175M into the regional economy. This designation, critical to the further restoration of Colt Manufacturing, has been independently estimated to generate an additional \$150M for the regional economy and create 1,000 additional jobs over the next five years. If no further development occurs, it will only yield \$30M and 229 jobs.

I thank you for your time and consideration and do hope that you will move this resolution forward, not only because this recognition is long past due, but because of the many positive outcomes that will no doubt result from Coltsville being designated as a National Park.